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Approved For Release 2004/01/16 : CIA-RDP79T00975A000100180001-0

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27 February 1951

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Copy No. 10

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

Working Paper!!!

Dry Run Only

DOCUMENT NO. 19
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
NOT CLASSIFIED
DATE PREPARED TO: TS S
DATE PREPARED: 12-15-71

2007

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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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State Department review completed

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EASTERN EUROPE

1. Gottwald speech confirms Titoist movement within Czech Communist Party:

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In a recent speech to the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party, President and Party Chairman Gottwald disclosed what he termed a "widespread plot to gain control of the Party, to change its policy, and to usurp the leadership of the State." Among those implicated in the speech were former Foreign Minister Clementis, Moravian Party Secretary Sling, and Deputy Secretary-General Svermova. Gottwald promised that "Czechoslovakia will not become a second Yugoslavia," called for greater vigilance by the Party leadership, and reminded all Czechs to remain faithful to Stalin.

Comment: President Gottwald's address confirms a long-suspected behind-the-scenes struggle for power within the Czech Party. The recent intensification of this struggle, which has brought it out into the open, probably reflects increased efforts of the Soviets to extend their control more effectively over the Czech economy. A virtual ultimatum that Czechoslovakia should more rapidly integrate its economy into the Soviet master plan for the Orbit was delivered in February 1950 in Moscow to Party Secretary-General Slansky by Kremlin Politburo members Malenkov and Mikoyan.

WESTERN EUROPE

2. Pleven asks confidence vote:

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In an effort to postpone an admission by the French Assembly of its inability to agree on electoral reform, Premier Pleven is seeking a vote of confidence on 27 February on a proposal to return the government's compromise bill to committee. The Popular Republican (MRP) deputies, who must now weigh their

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consistent rejection of compromise solutions against the odium of joining with the Communists to bring down the government, have insisted that the confidence vote be delayed until the afternoon of the 27th in order to allow as much time as possible for efforts to reach an agreement.

Comment: An absolute majority against Pleven on a vote of confidence would work to the considerable advantage of the Communists. The resulting elections would be held under the current electoral system, which gave the Communists nearly 30 percent of the seats in the present Assembly. All non-Communist parties are intent on reducing this representation, and the MRP will probably support Pleven on the scheduled confidence vote, although the party's subsequent course is still in doubt.

3. France unwilling to accept immediate military aid to Spain:

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According to the Director of Political Affairs in the French Foreign Ministry, the present French Government is not in a position to welcome publicly a Spanish contribution to Western defense. With an eye to the forthcoming elections, the government is unwilling to risk the sort of propaganda with which the Franco regime habitually exploits favorable developments in its foreign relations. The Socialists, in particular, will oppose any steps beyond those already taken to restore full diplomatic relations with Madrid, which they accepted grudgingly. Embassy Paris believes that if the 1951 French elections produce a more stable government, a concrete proposal with possibilities of prompt military implementation, advanced preferably through NATO, might be more readily acceptable.

Comment: Foreign Minister Schuman declared last summer that the question of utilizing the strategic potentialities of Spain could be solved only by admitting Spain to NATO. French popular opinion has been deeply disturbed by the possibility of a defense line established at the Pyrenees. Some French army officers, however, would welcome the integration of Spanish combat units into a European Army.

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4. Franco may approach US and UK on possible changes in Spanish regime:

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[Redacted]

The British Foreign Office understands that Franco may sound out the US and British representatives in Madrid regarding the attitude of their governments toward a possible "broadening of the base" of his regime. Such an approach is thought by the Foreign Office to be connected with negotiations between Don Juan and Franco, who may meet in the near future. The Foreign Office feels that Franco may desire (a) to gain Monarchist support, thus destroying the non-Communist opposition coalition and possibly driving the moderate Left into the Communist fold, and (b) to involve the US and UK in Spanish political intrigue.

Comment: There is evidence that Franco recently offered Cabinet posts to Don Juan Monarchists, but without success. Although he has also approached Don Juan regarding a meeting, he is not willing to relinquish his political control. He may feel that, because of his improved relations with the US, he will be able to gain Monarchist support with a minimum of concessions on his part.

SCANDINAVIA

5. Swedish firm to refuse export of strategic bearings to Soviet Orbit:

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[Redacted]

The Swedish Foreign Office has informed US Embassy Stockholm that SKF will undertake not to accept any new orders from Eastern Europe for non-standard bearings or for certain types and sizes of standard bearings defined as strategic by SKF.

Comment: This constitutes the first instance of a definite commitment on the part of the Swedes to give "International List I treatment" to any commodity. This new and more co-operative attitude undoubtedly stems largely from a fear that Sweden might otherwise suffer in the allocation of raw materials from the West.

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